

MEMBERSHIP, 1923 (Continued)

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MENT, Concord, N. H.

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New England Trail Conference

BEAUTY IN TRAILS

An Address before the
NEW ENGLAND TRAIL CONFERENCE
January 19, 1923

by

JAMES STURGIS PRAY

Chairman of the
Harvard School of Landscape Architecture

Publication No. 9

Boston, 1923

NEW ENGLAND TRAIL CONFERENCE

Chairman: Albert M. Turner (Connecticut State Park and Forest Commission), Hartford, Conn.

Secretary-Treasurer: Arthur C. Comey (Appalachian Mountain Club), Harvard Square, Cambridge, Mass.

Executive or Steering Committee: The Chairman, Secretary and Charles P. Cooper (Green Mountain Club); Ira T. Yarnall (U. S. Forest Service); R. N. Berry (Boy Scouts, New England Region).

PURPOSE

To secure co-operative activity, and to promote the creation and maintenance of a system of connecting trails in New England.

PUBLICATIONS

1. A Tour afoot: Trail Map of New England. 1917. Free.
2. The Attractions and Rewards of Trail Making. Nathaniel L. Goodrich. (From Appalachia, XIV, 3, p. 247) 1918. Out of Print.
3. New England Trail Conference. Paul R. Jenks. (From Appalachia, XIV, 3, p. 280) 1918. Free.
4. Trail Census (Summarization of Detailed Reports). 1920. Out of Print.
5. Map: Trails Maintained in the White Mountains, with Key Map of New England. 1921. Revised, 1923. Price, plain 50 cents; colored, \$1.50.
6. Standards of Trail Construction and Maintenance; Logging Road Trails; The Naming of Trails; Trail signs. 1921. 10 cents.
7. Open Camps. Wm. G. Howard. 1922. 10 cents.
8. Sign Painting. 1923. 5 cents.

BEAUTY IN TRAILS

By James Sturgis Pray

Since, at a recent meeting of the Boston Society of Landscape Architects, I made an earnest appeal for safeguarding the beauty in and along our trails and warned of the rapidly increasing danger in some regions of serious injury and even total loss of this beauty, it seems to be believed that, with my interest in the subject, my past experience with trails as user, maker, and planner, and my training as a landscape architect, I may render service by presenting a preliminary statement on Beauty in Trails—to provoke discussion and perhaps lead later to a more formal pronouncement. Although it might seem that this is a topic which can be hit off in an hour, it can very easily become the discussion of the beauty of all outdoors. I have been started on one of the most interesting trails I have ever followed, albeit full of distractions—and I certainly shall not reach the end of it soon. I do not desire to!

I have spent many of the happiest and most truly profitable moments of my life up to now following trails, tramping through the wilderness without trails, making trails, planning trails. Twenty years ago I was in charge of all Appalachian Mountain Club paths and camps, having among other memorable contacts many with Edmands, then actively pushing his wonderful system on the Presidential Range. Since then a most impressive accomplishment has taken place, made possible by increased interest, money, and cooperation of local clubs, the A. M. C., the United States Forest Service, the New England Trail Conference, etc. Now I come back like old Rip, and rub my eyes and see: first, a great development of certain conceptions and undertakings which I had a hand in initiating and advocating, but which have now developed beyond my fondest dreams; second, of course, various new constructive ideas, developed partly in response to such changed conditions as the growth in popu-

lation and in consequent trail-use, and as the great increase in cut-over and burnt-over areas. Conceptions or undertakings which I had a hand in initiating were particularly three: first, the organizing of existing and proposed or desirable future trails into a system of main and subordinate ways*; second, the adoption and retention of the policy by the A. M. C. of limiting its responsibility to main ways, leaving subordinate ways to local clubs*; third, the voting of larger appropriations for trail construction and maintenance. Where I had hundreds my present successor, I find, has thousands of dollars to spend, his task and responsibility having correspondingly increased. Camps, too, have grown in number and capacity, not to say luxury. And this Conference has published among its pamphlets one entitled "Standards of Trail Construction and Maintenance", for which I must voice my enthusiastic admiration. It is a model for all future comparable works!

There have been, then, immense gains in mileage, organization, and up-keep, thanks to greater expenditure of interest and thought, time and money, and cooperation. And this is only the beginning. To the extent of this increased interest is due the need that the larger aspects, in a geographical sense, now have the attention of this Conference. MacKaye's dream for the development, about a comprehensive system of through trails virtually coextensive with the Appalachian system, of an immense recreational area serving unprecedented industrial populations of the future Atlantic Seaboard must come true! I am heart and soul for what he is doing. But, if such a dream is to be fully realized and render the incalculable benefit hoped for to those great populations, and if—and this is of course our more immediate concern—our existing and projected trails are to

*For early history of this I refer you to my article in "Appalachia" in 1903, entitled "The Swift River Trail and the Club's Policy".

do what I at least conceive to be their main job, we must see to it that beauty as well as practicality is secured and assured. Practicality, as I have said, is being admirably secured; this is always more to be counted on, and fortunately, since it is obviously fundamental. But beauty, which for our trails is equally indispensable, since without it interest in and refreshment from the trail quickly fails, is and always will be more apt to be lost sight of and crowded out in the construction, maintenance, and use of the trail.

What I shall have to say will be a matter-of-fact talk—dealing with our common familiar heritage or acquisition of ideas—a rough, preliminary attempt to state the problem and to set out some of its more important factors.

To you people certainly it is not necessary to develop at length the fundamental importance of preserving and even developing natural beauty as the priceless lure to "hit the trail". Clearly this must be kept in mind as the prime essential goal throughout the several operations of locating, constructing, maintaining, and using the trails, if they are to fulfill their several functions, on which I venture to assume we agree. Apart from service solely as ways through for purely utilitarian ends, and as fire-breaks, paths for fire-patrol, etc., the main functions are refreshment and pleasure from the contemplation of beauty and from contrast of environment, and health through such refreshment and pleasure and through exercise in such environment. Subordinate functions include education, in the broad, fundamental sense through such primal activities as observation, thought, and action—not the least of such action being the locating, making, and repairing of the trail—and social intercourse of a particularly wholesome sort. To all these, in the full measure of their success, beauty is clearly essential; and the more beauty of fitting and effective kinds, the more refreshment—intellectual, emotional, spiritual, and hence physical

—and the more health and pleasure. The more we enjoy, the more we understand; the more we understand, the more we enjoy and become sensitive to beauty in our surroundings and benefit by it.

Perhaps the real way to talk to an audience like this on beauty in trails would be to conduct it—leisurely, very leisurely—over trails of varying beauty, pointing out the sources of beauty, its needs of protection, and opportunities for its increase. If I did this, I would develop certain appeals to other senses than that of sight—such as that of hearing, and that of touch. The music of the brook, bird-notes, the feel of the footing, for instance, so far as we are quiet and receptive enough to be conscious of them—aye, even the very stillness of the trail—are important sources of pleasure, forms of non-visual beauty which have their place and should not be missed.

For ideal results, not only during planning but throughout construction and subsequent repair, we must then, while necessarily and properly thinking in terms of practicality, be equally thinking of agreeableness and particularly of the visual beauty to result for the refreshment and inspiration of men. Obviously, though a given trail may, for a considerable portion of its length, have a prevailing character, the particular beauties possible and most fitting will vary with every inch of the way. Therefore, to set up and follow too standardized ways, to prescribe treatments, would be worse than useless and would result in serious loss of interest and spontaneity, of fitness of character, and of maximum esthetic satisfaction. On the practical side, this Conference has already shown extraordinarily good judgment in the restraint it has used in the matter of standardization. On the esthetic side, it is still less desirable to go far in standardizing; for there is even more danger of sacrificing what the trail is built primarily to supply. Some regulations doubtless can and should be

adopted calculated to protect the landscape from unnecessary injury during trail-construction or use, as, for example, under construction and repair, a regulation providing for cutting rather than breaking or hacking; one for cutting close to trunk or close to ground, or even below the ground-surface (perhaps removing and replacing soil to do so); one providing against the destruction of delicate vegetation along the sides of the trail by piling slash upon it, etc., etc.; and even one restricting unnecessary removal of rock for possibly easier passage when rock is the source of special beauty. But my recommendations must be less in the form of proposals which could ever well become formal regulations than in the form of guiding principles and suggestions, positive and negative.

This Conference officially recognizes: trunk and local paths and trails, bridle paths, graded paths, cleared trails, and blazed trails, and has admirably defined them. Our present problem concerning trail-beauty varies accordingly. Furthermore, in locating and developing our trails—still as affecting fitting types of beauty and opportunities for beauty of different sorts along them, we must take into account or take advantage of climatic and seasonal conditions; topographic conditions, including resulting gradient, effort, and compensation; forest canopy or its absence (present forest character); soil, rock, drainage; amount and kind of anticipated traffic; dominant purposes of this traffic; its goals and the possible routes between them; the scenery that can be made accessible to view from along the course; favorable locations for shorter and longer rests—breathing places in beauty spots, for lunching places, and for camp sites; relations to other trails and to other established routes of travel and goals of travel; probable permanence; and cost, but not so much of initial construction as of the annually recurring items of maintenance. The question of relative permanence of trail

has actually led in a recent instance (see Mr. Goodrich's statement in a recent A. M. C. Bulletin) to the deliberate keeping of a trail within an area which has been either cut or burned over or is of such poor character of timber as to be in all probability safe from cutting. This apparently means sacrificing to permanence the very landscape interest for which largely we follow the trail. Who of us really cares to follow a trail after this interest is gone?

I have not included the type of traveller and his special recreational or intellectual purpose. One might say that ideally trails should vary to suit varieties of observers, according to their respective ages, vigor, knowledge, tastes, habitual pace, solitariness or subordination to a small or large party. Practically, of course, one trail must serve an indefinite number and hence variety of observers, even do all this at once; though each of many kinds may be considered, and throughout our thought and action in this field we must keep two essential ideals before us, difficult but absolutely necessary to combine; first, the preservation and, if may be, increase, of existing natural or more or less man-made landscape beauty; and, second, the making of this pleasantly accessible—opening it up to the enjoyment of larger numbers of people of necessarily widely varying degrees of appreciation. If the inspiring landscapes of the world—the grand scenery of mountain regions, for example, but no less the simple, homely landscapes of more familiar and typical character—were to be seen, though we were still here, only by the stars, or even by what we are pleased to call the lower life on our planet, we probably would not be interested in their preservation. Their interest and value to us depend wholly upon their being seen by humans, not merely, be it said, humans here and now in our own time, but humans extending into the indefinite future. To be useful, refreshing, recreating, these beauties must be made accessible, and not merely—at least so

is the demand—to a few at a time (though in many cases unless we limit the enjoyment of the beauty to a few at a time this beauty is forever lost to all) but to an ever-increasing number of good, worthy folk, needing this refreshment, theoretically entitled to it, but largely uneducated with respect to the preservation and perpetuation of this beauty, under conditions of such visual use, for the countless generations to come. The problem, then, is really that of the landscape architect (and of course any one who does the job is a landscape architect even though he call himself a lawyer or a plumber) to open up, by a trail, the utmost of landscape beauty, not only in the trail itself but as visible from points in its course, to the greatest number of people at one time consistently with not seriously endangering but rather scrupulously safeguarding this beauty for its service through the ages to come. So safeguarded intelligently by persons of appreciation of landscape beauty and of competent training in its conservation and development, this beauty should actually increase rather than diminish with the passage of time, becoming ever more perfectly fitted for man's refreshment—refreshment which is fast becoming vital to continued existence on this sphere.

How, in such a complicated field, can we, for our present purpose, introduce ordered constructive thought, how come down to earth, how hit the trail? I think by seeking and setting out the sources of beauty in trails and certain principles applicable to its preservation and development, while noting, too, things to avoid. In all this we must remember that, under the infinitely varying circumstances which arise, the application of these principles to these sources of beauty and their protection and promotion must come largely through the judgment—the sense of beauty and sensitiveness—of the trail-maker and the trail-user at the moment.

Theoretically, this discussion would embrace three sets of landscapes: those to which the trails conduct in each case as to a goal; those opened up by and from the trail in its course to the goal; and those of the trail itself throughout its course. The first of these, while to many, I fear, the most important if not the only important ones, are outside the scope of this paper and, as a matter of fact, largely out of the control of the trail-builder except for his election of them in the first instance as goals to which trails shall be led. The other two, however, which I will discuss in some detail, usually occupy in the aggregate a greater proportion of the time and attention of the trail-user, and, if fittingly located and developed (designed, constructed, maintained) by the maker and adequately taken care of by the user, will, I am convinced, actually bring to the user more real refreshment and true inspiration. The beauties they supply, particularly those of the trail itself are commonly less striking, and appear, though they are really not, less wonderful. They are the quieter, more familiar, less sensational, and more intimate beauties which, in our present over-speeded-up life, are much more needed, far more wholesome. In these quieter beauties, sometimes set before us on a smaller scale and requiring closer observation, there is more refreshing contrast in certain ways to the excitements of the senses in our intensive city life, from which most users of trails flee to the trails. The more we hit the trail for the enjoyment of the trail itself, rather than merely for the attainment of the goal to which it leads and for which it is still well that we should strive, the richer our life along the way and the better prepared we shall be to appreciate intelligently and to enjoy thoroughly the beauties at the end. Moreover, these beauties along the way, as I will now attempt to show, are very largely within the control of the trail-maker to develop.

Broadly speaking, then, for our present pur-

pose, the beauty which the trail can and should supply is, from the point of view of the user of the trail, of two sorts; first, the landscape beauty of the stretches of country visible from the trail and opened up by the trail at certain points of its course—including restricted vistas and more or less distant and broad prospects; for example, the view of a mountain-peak or range; of a local water-fall; and the view out over a lake or up or down a stream or across a valley; second, the beauty afforded by the trail itself—its own landscape beauty and interest, including that of its actual footway and its more or less enclosing masses on the sides and overhead. In general, more interest will tend to be given to the views from the trail, to what is seen beyond the trail, whether from long stretches or from vista-openings, when the trail is high, open, flat or gradual, easy, slowly followed, and when the traveler is more sure of himself, and more alert; conversely, more on the trail itself, when this is low, closed, steep, difficult, the motion swifter, or when the traveler is less sure of himself or less alert. In either case, from one point of view, this beauty comes to us from the so-called materials or elements of landscape, i. e., earth, rock, water, vegetation, animals, sky, and man-made structures including buildings and shelters, walls and fences, roads and bridges; from another, from color, form, light and shade, and shadow, contrast of shaded trail and sunny outlook, texture, composition—including balance, rhythm, harmony, variety, contrast, etc., etc. The compositions are usually of a most subtle sort, growing at best out of infinitely varying sets of local circumstances, and controlled and directed by the measure of some man's perception of beauty, sense of fitness, and knowledge of how to secure and perpetuate these special forms of beauty.

In dealing with the beauty of landscape as seen from the trail, we should always consider with their different requirements and possibili-

ties both the broad prospects from along the course and also the special vistas had, as it were, through windows in the walls of the trail. About ten years ago, the persistent tunnelers for the railway up the Jungfrau were told (or the fact somehow leaked out to them) that the section of tunnel on which they had been working for several years was now so near coming out to daylight that about two weeks more of labor would literally see them through. Though they had worked patiently for years on this one section, two weeks more proved beyond their human powers of waiting; so, without the knowledge of those in charge of the work, they put in a tremendous charge and blew out the whole side of the mountain. Subsequently the tunnel was extended along the course as planned but a marvelous window had been opened which will always supply one of the most magnificent imaginable mountain vistas. I can vouch for this story, because, before there had been time to clear away the debris, I crawled in over it to the opening and was one of the first to be privileged to enjoy what, without such an opening, no man could ever have had. Although this happens to be the window in a railway rock-tunnel, and, insofar as not a part of the plan, may be said to be the result of accident rather than design, it illustrates the value of a special vista-point when strategically placed in the course of a mountain trail, and of a door or window (for it may to advantage be sometimes one, sometimes the other) cut in the wall in such a way as to make likely, if not actually to insure, that the observer will not only stop and look but will get the vista from the right direction and through an attractive enframement. If, in locating the vista-point, there be some considerable stretch of the trail from which the view will, on the whole, be equally good, advantage will come from locating the point where a stopping to rest and take breath would anyway frequently occur. This, however, is a second-

ary consideration, our prime concern being to reveal the most interesting, beautiful, or impressive view possible, and to see to it that not only its enframement but the immediate setting of that enframement where the observer will stand is carefully, skillfully, and appreciatively developed out of the particular local circumstances. Here it will sometimes be worth while to keep the trail sufficiently back from the view-point to allow between them standing room for a number of people. In certain instances, it will be necessary, or virtually so, and it is by no means always a disadvantage, to have the view-point attainable only after following a special branch-trail or by-path (varying in length with the conditions) which leads only to the view-point and not beyond it. In other cases, there may be two special approaches, one from the down-hill side, the other from the up-hill side, which in effect will together make a continuous loop with the main trail and supply both a longer alternative course with the view and a more direct one without it for those who lack the time, strength, or desire to take it in. Added interest may be given at times by having several quite different vistas revealed from points quite close together, and, occasionally but not too often, by the view-point's confronting the visitor with unexpected suddenness. The character of the pointer or sign in such a case, as in all cases on trails, will properly vary with the character of the trail (its degree of wildness, for instance), the number and kind of people using it, whether it must do winter as well as summer duty, and so on, but in general should be large enough and conspicuous enough to be effective, but as small and as inconspicuous as is consistent with this end. Many good vista-points we can all recall; but is it not true, when we think of them, that in comparatively few cases does anything like the full measure of possible landscape interest and beauty seem to have been developed and maintained?

These views from the trail of which I have been speaking may be intensive or extensive, ranging from a closely framed restricted view of some distant object such as a mountain-summit, a notch in the hills, a patch of sky, to a prospect of one hundred eighty degrees or more, taking on somewhat the character of a panorama; but, in any case, it is seen, as it were, through a door or window in the flank of the trail.

The other form of prospect from the trail is the continuous outlook from along a considerable part of its course, as, for example, in slabbing up an open slope or following the crest of a ridge. In these cases it may first appear that there is nothing we can do of special value, by taking thought, for revealing this beauty to the best advantage from the line of the trail itself; but, in both these instances, the direction of alignment of trail, not merely in certain short local units of it but even as respects its general direction, sometimes for a considerable distance, can in part be determined in relation to the best angle of view, as when one seeks to make the most for beauty and interest in the occasional looks ahead from a trail following up a valley and opportunities occur to reveal perhaps its whole cross-section at a point which one is slowly approaching, and where of course it changes with nearer and nearer approach. Again, it may be that by carrying a trail up a little more steeply at first and then for a way approximately on the contour, rather than by a uniform profile through the same total distance, the eye will be lifted sooner above the tops of woods on the slope below and get views across the valley from this approximately level stretch of trail, or perhaps even sight over a lower ridge to a still more distant prospect. These at least are perfectly practicable means which opportunity frequently offers to increase the beauty of wider prospects from considerable stretches of trail. Comparatively rarely the extent of such

prospect from the trail or the extent of trail from which such prospect is to be had may to advantage be diminished by planting or even increased by cutting.

So much for the ways in which, in our locating, cutting, and general treatment of trails and adjacent areas involved, we may increase the interest and beauty of landscape which is not of the trail but is made available from it. The beauty and interest of the trail itself and the ways in which we may develop these may, I think, be most effectively set forth under the following heads: first, the floor of the trail, including the footing; second, the flanks or walls; third, the ceiling or roof; fourth, the total compositions made up of these elements, including mainly the successive vistas along the trail.

With respect to the floor of the trail, there should be taken into account and weighed in any case and always of course to an extent consistent with a reasonable directness (I mean three-dimensional directness), first, its form, including its actual alignment in plan, its profile and gradient, and its width and cross-section; second, its material or rather materials; third, its color; and fourth, its surface. The problem of alignment always raises vital questions of the degree desirable of directness versus roundaboutness considered with respect both to considerable units of distance and with respect to smaller local sections of these units, and it is not ordinarily practicable to divorce these questions of alignment in plan from corresponding questions of gradient in profile. The two must be worked out together in following out the line of least resistance, which will carry us in the desired direction with the minimum of construction involved and therefore the minimum of departure from and marring of the existing topographic form and with the maximum of comfort and interest and revelation of beauty by the way. As contrasted with the alignment of a good motor road, where more or less considerable curves will be taken

at relatively high speed, we are not seeking in the alignment of the trail the line of most perfect continuity, least of all this at the expense of considerable cut and fill and consequent esthetic damage to the terrana. The line will sometimes be straight for some distance, giving one the feeling of satisfaction in making more directly toward the goal and also supplying a vista; at other times it will curve gently in a more or less lengthy sweep determined perhaps by the contours; and occasionally it will need to turn abruptly and even unexpectedly about some obstruction or lead by bridge or otherwise across a stream the trail has been following. In profile the trail will sometimes be gentle, sometimes steep even to the need of actual steps. And again the profile will at times be straight, but more often concave or convex and with very different effects to the eye. Similarly the cross-section of the trail may be flat, crowned, or dished, or in a rough trail all of these at once! Most often, whatever the cross-section of the trail when first built, it will with use become concave, as we know, and offer all too tempting a course at certain seasons or after hard rains for a temporary stream. All these varying factors make for the inexhaustible diversity of the trail and its constant interest.

Happily the materials of the floor of the trail are usually the local materials—earth, rock, etc.—than which nothing could be more appropriate. In certain through-trails carrying large traffic and particularly when attended by more than the ordinary danger, other material may be brought in, such as cement, where this will make for more permanent construction less likely to be dangerously out of repair; for example, on parts of the Presidential Range in the White Mountains. Unless there be special occasion, however, it is always a mistake to use other than the local and the more natural rather than artificial-looking materials; a log-bridge, for instance, being far preferable to one

made from boards brought to the place, just as a corduroy is more fitting than a board-walk for the floor of a trail which has a wilderness character, steps built up of local stone than a ladder, and a ladder of rough poles (if really strong and durable) than one made from sawn lumber; and when such a trail crosses a brook the skilful provision for a safe though more exciting crossing from stone to stone than for even a log-bridge,—just on the score of naturalness. But, here as always, circumstances alter cases, and in some such instances the log-bridge will commend itself to the experienced judgment of the trail-builder. Rock, the most permanent of all floor materials, is always interesting whether in level, sloping, or precipitous surfaces, and whether wholly revealed, or partially concealed and its beauties accented by some covering of vegetation which sets it off. Over certain portions of the floor, particularly of comparatively little used trails, vegetation alone may be the material—turf, moss, ferns, bracken, spruce-spills, or dried leaves—and add much to the agreeableness of the footing and the attractive appearance of the floor. The color of the floor will vary of course with the materials, but it will usually be dull and restful. Upon the quality of the surface, too, depends, more than we realize, the pleasure we have from the trail. Here we are concerned not merely with visual satisfaction, but with the gratification of another sense, that of touch: the tactile sensations of our footing whether this be dry or wet, rough or smooth, hard or soft, firm or quaking, are far-reaching, fundamental sources of pleasure as well as largely within our control.

The walls of the trail, to put the matter somewhat Irish, are made up of solids and of voids or gaps where strictly speaking there is no wall at all. Both solids and voids vary from the tiniest specks to the whole side of a trail for miles, as along the trails crossing the high passes of the Great Divide in Glacier National

Park. Just as, on a rough or steeply sloping trail, whether one is going up or down, we see more of the floor than of the walls and in going down particularly may see even more of the sky than of the walls, so, along a level trail, if smooth, our main interest lies in the walls themselves, except perhaps for the floor a good deal ahead. As in the case of the floor, we are concerned with a variety of materials. These are only occasionally rock, still more rarely earth, and normally are either vegetation or sky. Here much of the interest, however little we may be conscious of the fact, will lie in the ground-line (the line of contact of the wall and the floor) and the sky-line, and also in the forms of the openings, in the varying color, and in all the ranges of texture from that of the close stand of scrub spruce to that of the more open wall of deciduous shrubs with its patches of light and shade or to the open beechwood free of undergrowth because of the depth of its shade. Close to the ground, the delicate forms of the sylvan flowers and ferns may be a great source of interest. But the interest of the walls centers very largely in the smooth or rough barked columnar shafts of the trees, and in the infinitely varying forms of leafage near at hand or farther afield, giving glimpses into mysterious depths, charming through stimulation of curiosity.

Of the ceiling of the trail, we see least. For this there is an obvious reason in personal safety. The sky-gazer may come all too quickly to grief. Yet, in the extent and shape of the patches of sky in the canopy or ceiling of the trail lie some of the trail's greatest beauties, and through these openings above may largely come, directly or indirectly, our effects of light and shade and shadow; and, looking up through them, we may get beautiful cloud effects; while, in many a woodland trail, the interest and beauty of its roof are due largely to the branches and leaves and even sloping trunks of trees which overhang the way, and, at a

few spots, special thrills may attend the overhanging rock.

In this somewhat detailed but exceedingly inadequate account of the more fundamental sources of local interest and beauty in the trail itself, I have of course sought to be comprehensive rather than complete, and suggestive than informative, in the hope that, by the presentation of this subject from this somewhat artificial angle, I might in a short space call attention to the principal sources of beauty, existing and possible, in trails, and in that way show what things will be most profitable to consider in our double problem of conserving and developing beauty and of making it available to refresh those who follow the trails. May I add here a special appeal for the more delicate, perishable beauties that will not stand the crowd but, safely aside from the main line of march, can and should be protected for the deeper joy of more expanded souls prepared to see and benefit by them.

We are all familiar with the typical history of a trail that has been long established: the first stage, the virgin area unaffected by man either for worse or for better; the second, a raw and ugly state, the direct effect of man's practical work of construction in the clearing and building of the way; the third, in which the floor of the trail itself has improved underfoot by human use both in comfort and in appearance and nature has healed the wounds and restored the beauty of the walls; and finally, the fourth, where the trail has either suffered in appearance from excessive use or wrong use, or has, despite the use that has been made of it, either by grace of favoring natural circumstances or by human care and maintenance, gone on improving in appearance, ripening and mellowing with the years till it realizes a perfect blending of the man-made trail with its natural setting. Meanwhile, in order that this ideal may be reached, it is essential that such distinctively man-made special

features as signs, bridges, ladders, camps, and so forth, shall, in the first instance, have been designed both in a way to fit them effectively to their purpose and with a view to render them appropriately agreeable in appearance. And the more reasonable and convenient the trail is in plan, in profile, and in cross-section, and the better it is maintained, the less likely the impairment of its special beauties by hard or inconsiderate use.

I have not touched on camp-sites along the course of the trail or less important stopping-places for resting and lunching. These are of great importance, however, first to command beauty, and second, to supply beauty in themselves. Without the utmost care, as we all know, they become inevitably ugly, where "only man is vile". This is largely preventable by intelligent planning, adequate provision for facilitating the doing in good ways of all that will need to be done, and, if necessary, specific invitation to be considerate in the use of the areas. When camp-sites are to have much use, we must, in very trail-defense, provide more artificial arrangements, and may well do this frankly, but all the more must we seek to create and maintain attractive sites. We must insure protection of the water-supply; minimize fire-risk and fuel-consumption by building special outdoor fireplaces conveniently adapted to cooking, and, to prevent wrong cutting, even furnish woodpiles; and particularly must we provide for sanitary and inoffensive disposal of wastes. These arrangements must perforce be reasonably convenient, but they must be fitting, and should contribute to the harmony of the whole.

It is a good principle of design to seize on any outstanding distinctive character of a trail, and, in its treatment, seek to do those things that will emphasize and accentuate this character, similarly avoiding when possible those effects which will distract from it or weaken it. Given a trail of distinctive character, how-

ever this be obtained, its very name may well be framed to suggest it.

Finally, to see and feel beauty, we must "let go", and we must be at ease, that is without a sense of haste, and free from anxiety as to getting safely out of the woods before dark and from uneasiness as to our footing or as to our eyes. All this may be even when moving at some speed, but while everyone has his pace (the rate of speed normal to him) it will generally be true, of course, that the slower the progress the more we see by the way. Personally I find that, while, as I get older, I appreciate the easier trail more, I am impressed by the unwisdom and short-sightedness of making the trail too greatly facilitate speed, for then people are led—often unconsciously—so speedily over it that they experience comparatively little of its beauty. If, on the other hand, they are obliged to go slowly because of the difficulty of the trail, they may be so absorbed in meeting its difficulty that again they see little. The trail must be clear, safe, even comfortable—in order that there need be no worry on that score—but not too easy, lest we fail to get the maximum direct enjoyment of its visual beauty. All types of ways—our more or less man-made channels, whatever they may be—function like the Ford "to get you there"; but the trail is peculiarly a type of traffic-way for which this "getting you there" is often, or should often be, not the primary but only a secondary purpose! Its prime object should often be to give us pleasure, refreshment, heart's joy and inspiration, to whatever "there" it may or may not get us, whether to a final objective, or only to a preliminary one, or even to no particular objective at all. I contend that, if the trail refresh us, it matters less whether we return without having "gotten there". In short, the "there" may frequently, if not always, best be a tentative one attainment of which is conditioned upon winning these values along the way; and I submit that it is

for these, first of all, that the trail in such cases exists.

What I have said applies quite generally to all trails, whether for foot or horse, though the problems are different for different types, and each individual problem has its own unique set of opportunities and limitations and its own fitting solution. In every case, the beauty we must seek is that which is possible, and that which is fitting, and that which will endure under conditions of right use by an increasing number of men, women and children.

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